

# An Analysis of an Irredentist Tract: Jacques Bacid's, *Through the Ages*

BY SARANTOS I. KARGAKOS

The Canadian Macedonian Cultural Library Foundation published Jacques Bacid's article *Through the Ages* with the aim of justifying "the right of the Macedonian people to call themselves by this name." It is written in the form of a court presentation suggesting an indictment against Greece.

## **FALSIFICATION OF THE GREEK VIEWS**

According to Bacid, Greece alleges that:

1. "The Macedonians [Bacid uses this term to describe the people who live in the area of the FYROM] should not be recognized as Macedonians because the Macedonians have been of Greek nationality since 2000 BC.
2. Those Macedonians whose language belongs to the Slavic family of languages must not call themselves Macedonians because 4,000 years ago the Macedonians spoke Greek and still speak nothing but Greek.



**The ruins of Amphipolis**

3. Macedonia has no right to call itself by this name because Macedonia has always been and is today a region of Greece".
- Three comments can be made concerning these allegations:

1. No credible Greek historian has alleged that the Macedonians were of Greek nationality since 2000 BC for the simple reason that the notion of nationality only developed recently.
2. No Greek historian is likely to have alleged that the Macedonians spoke and still speak only Greek. Some of those who played a leading role during the Macedonian struggle (1903-1907), as with Captain Kottas, spoke only Slavic although they had a definite Greek identity.
3. Regarding the third point of these allegations, Greece never has claimed that the area of the FYROM "has always been and is today a region of Greece". Greece never has raised issues of irredentist claims against FYROM because it respects international treaties, particularly regarding the territorial settlements in the Balkans. On the contrary, the government of Skopje and its patrons suggest or even lay claims against Greece.

## **THE VIEWS OF THE INHABITANTS OF FYROM**

After distorting Greek views, Bacid juxtaposes these distortions to the beliefs of the inhabitants of FYROM, which are referred to as "the People of Macedonia". These beliefs are the following:

1. The ancient Macedonians were a distinct European people, conscious and proud of their nationality, their customs, their language and their name. The same applies to their descendants today.
2. The ancient Macedonians regarded the Greeks as neighbors not as Kinsmen. The Greeks treated the Macedonians as foreigners ("barbarians") whose native language was Macedonian not Greek.
3. Macedonia never was a region of Greece. On the contrary, Greece was often subject to Macedonia. In 1913, Greece and her Balkan allies partitioned Macedonia, and if today a portion of Macedonia belongs to Greece, it is by virtue of an illegal partition of the whole and occupation of a part of Macedonia.

According to these views

- the inhabitants of the Greek Macedonia, which constitutes the main part of the ancient Macedonia,



cannot be considered as descendants of the ancient Macedonians.

● the Slavophone or Albanophone inhabitants of FYROM have to be considered as descendants of the ancient Macedonians and they can call themselves by that name, whereas the Greek speakers who live in Greek Macedonia are deprived of such claims.

## THE "MACEDONIAN NATION"

The following must be noted concerning the so-called "Macedonian nation".

1. The term "Macedonian nation" was not used in the 19th century. When the term "Macedonian" was used it virtually exclusively was with reference to Greek history. European and American textbooks and historical works examined the history of Macedonia as part of Greek history. Hence the states which were formed by the successors of Alexander the Great were called Hellenistic.

2. The term "Macedonian nation" was introduced by Pan-Slavic activists, whose ideas strongly influenced Bulgarian nationalists. In turn, these nationalist formulations were passed on to the Bulgarian communists.

The Bulgarian communists lobbied the Third International of the Comintern to support a "unified and independent Macedonia." The Fifth Congress of 1924 issued explicit orders to all communist parties to support this goal and to use it as a slogan. The Greek communist party conformed with these orders. As all communist parties, it supported the "struggle of the Macedonian (sic) nation for self-determination." For this reason, left wing intellectuals even today ascribe legitimacy to Slavo-Macedonian irredentist visions.

3. Lenin and Stalin supported policies pivoting around the existence of an independent "Soviet Macedonia" which could destabilize the Balkan States and serve as a satellite or proxy.

4. The same policy was followed by the Croat communist leader of the Yugoslav communist party Josip Broz Tito who established in 1944 the "People's Republic of Macedonia". His intention was to incorporate into this state "Macedonia of Pirin" (Bulgarian Macedonia) and "Aegean Macedonia" (Greek Macedonia) and make them part of his new communist federation.

5. The communist policies regarding a "Macedonian nation" ironically are set against what Marx himself wrote about the Greek character of Macedonia: "The peak period of Greece's internal flourishing coincides with Pericles' period; the peak period of Greece's external flourishing coincides with reign of Alexander the Great" (Marx-Engels, *Complete Works*, 2nd Russian edition, Vol. 1, p. 98).

## MACEDONIA'S BOUNDARIES

Bacid describes the area and sets the limits of ancient Macedonia in an arbitrary manner and without any reference to source, scholarly or otherwise. Moreover his use of contemporary Slavic place names when referring to ancient Macedonia is confusing, if not outright misleading.

In fact the boundaries of the ancient Macedonian kingdom shifted dynamically over time as that state

evolved. Herodotus sets the limits of the state of Alexander the first (498-454 BC) between the mountains of Olympus, Kamvounia, Berlisko and the Chalkidiki peninsula (Herodotus, VII, 113, 173). Thucydides (11,99) refers to a much enlarged area. Polybius (I, 2,4) wrote that the "Macedonians ruled the areas of Europe which lie between the Adriatic sea and Istrus river [Danube]".

## THE ORIGINS OF THE GREEKS

The descent of the Greeks (more properly, the question of their origins) constitutes a major historical problem. However as Bacid asserts that the Greeks descended "as goatherds and shepherds" through the area of Macedonia, it is difficult to understand why they did not establish any settlements in the area which has more valleys and grasslands than the areas of southern Greece.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS-MACEDONIANS AND MYCENEANS

"The [Mycenaean] archaeological finds from Macedonia are meager and sporadic; scholars believe that ancient Macedonia lay beyond the cultural and ethnic borders of Mycenaean Greece".

To begin with, archaeological findings in Greece which are not described as Mycenaean are not necessarily non-Greek. The term "Mycenaean" refers to a number of Greek populations with common cultural characteristics. Excavations in Macedonia have been conducted in a systematic manner only for the last few decades.

A large number of finds have been made in the region, many dating back to the Palaeolithic period. Archaeologists have established that there existed a local tradition in pottery which existed contemporaneously with those of Minoan and Mycenaean cultures. Numerous finds of pottery from the period beginning at 1500-1400 BC have been found in grave mounds, "tombes" as they are called in Macedonia.

Mycenaean findings of a later period are scattered throughout Macedonia (Dion, Aiani, Asseros, Meliki etc.). During the summer of 1992 the archaeologist George Chourmouziades discovered in the settlement of

*Macedonian stater of Philip II. Apollo is depicted on the obverse, a wingless Victory on the reverse. The inscription is telling as to the Hellenicity of the Macedonians. (Numismatic Museum, Athens)*



- Dispello, next to the lake by Kastoria, the oldest inscription that has ever been found in Europe. This find suggests a relationship between the Mycenaens and the Macedonians. The legendary founder of Mycenaens was Perseus. Perseus' symbol was a sun with radial sunbeams, similar to the symbol used by the royal dynasty of Macedonia. Moreover, the last king of Macedonia was called Perseus.

## KINSMEN OF THE MACEDONIANS

"The ancient Macedonians claimed kinship with the Illyrians, Thracians and Phrygians, not with the Greeks"

1. Bacid makes this statement without the slightest historical evidence.
2. Bacid alleges that "the Brygians of Macedonia were believed to be the European branch of the people who in Asia Minor were known as Phrygians ... Their name derives from the Macedonian word breg,



**Alexander in a lion hunt. (Mosaic, Pella)**

'hill/mountain'. The Brygians were the hillsmen of Macedonia". It is true that the word *breg* means mountain in Slavonic. However there is no evidence whatever to indicate that the words with Slavonic roots preexisted 800 or more years *before* the settlements of the Slavs in Macedonia.

A number of serious historical questions concerning the Brygians in fact concern scholars. According to Herodotus, the Brygians belonged to a different race than the Macedonians (Z, 185). He distinguished the Brygians from the Macedonians (e.g. "the Brygians, the Paeonians, the Macedonians", ΣΤ, 45) and he considered them a Thracian tribe (ΣΤ, 45). He wrote, "according the the Macedonians, these Phrygians were called Brygians, they were Europeans and during the period that they were leaving in Europe they were neighbors to the Macedonians" (2.73).

The relationship between the Greeks and the Phrygians was close. The Phrygians are often

mentioned in many Greek legends and therefore it can be concluded that they are kinsmen to the Greeks in the same manner and to the same extent that they were kinsmen to the Macedonians. According to a legend the Brygians under the leadership of Odysseus and the assistance of Ares and Apollo defeated the Thesprotians.

3. Another unsubstantiated statement by Bacid is that the "ancient Macedonians claimed kinship with the Illyrians". However, Alexander the Great accused his men for their hesitancy to follow him in India and told them that in the past "you grazed on the mountains a few sheep and you were obliged to fight for them *against* the Illyrians and the Triballians and against your neighbors the Thracians" (Arion, VII, 2). Furthermore, according to the historian Polybius, Perseus, the last Macedonian King, used an interpreter in negotiations with the Illyrians!

4. As usual Bacid cites no source to support his conclusion that "the ancient Macedonians regarded the Greeks as potentially dangerous neighbors, never as kinsmen". If he is led to this conclusion because of the wars between the Macedonians and other Greeks, he ignores the fact that, with the exception of the Persian wars, all the other wars of ancient Greek history were among the Greeks themselves.

5. Finally it is notable that the royal dynasties of Macedonia considered themselves descendants of the Temenides of Argos (in southern Greece) and therefore were called Argeiades. For that matter also the Paeonians also claimed that they came from the area of Argos.

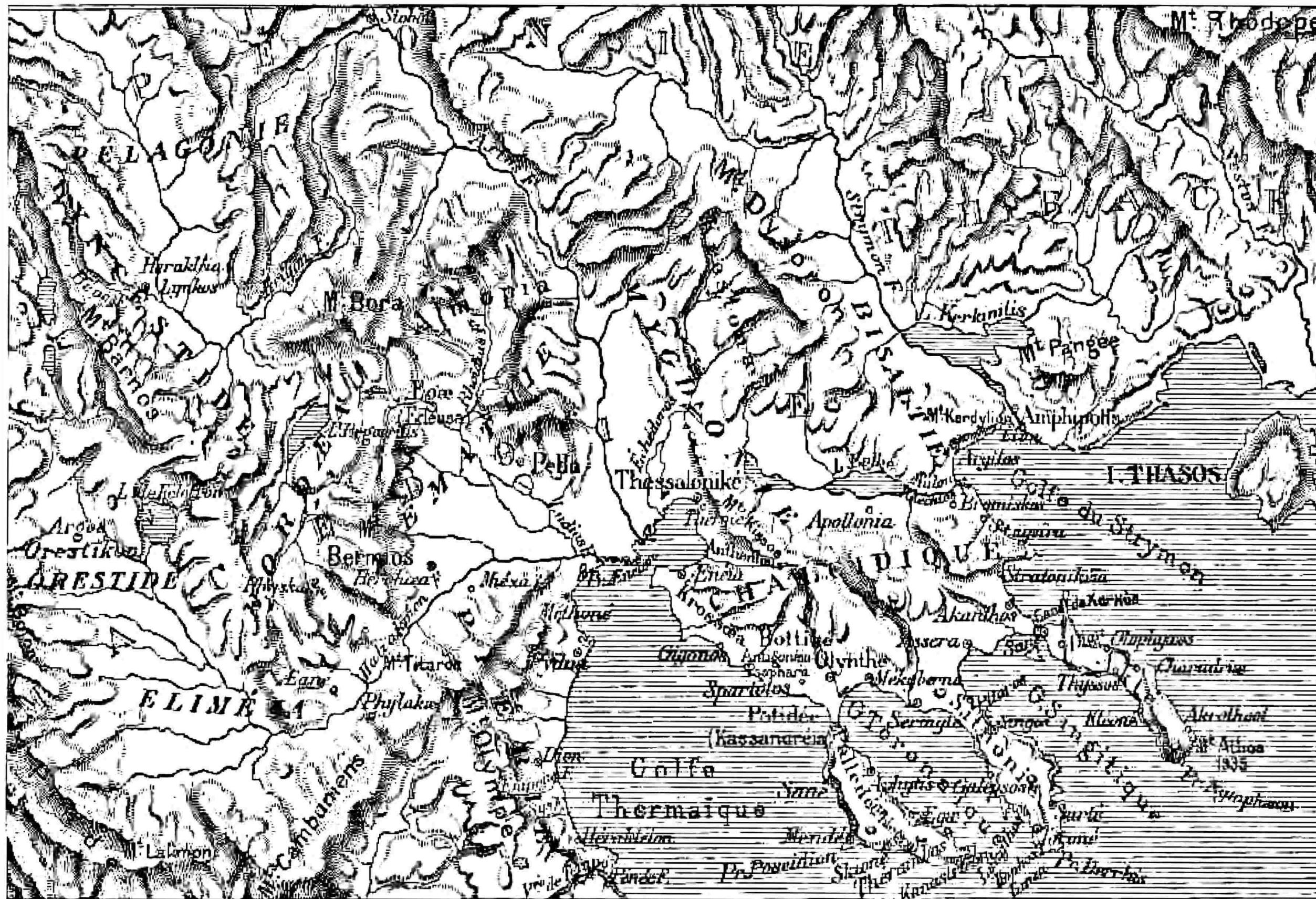
## THE "MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE"

Another distortion of the historical fact relates to the issue of the "Macedonian language". After the First World War diplomats attempted to classify the people of Yugoslavia into different nationalities according to the languages they spoke. Although "Macedonian" propaganda had been active during preceding years, linguists determined the existence of only four languages (Slovenian, Croat, Serbian and the Slavic of the Bitola area). In the area of Bitola (the town then known by its Greek name Monastiri) its inhabitants spoke Greek, Slavic, Vlach, Turkish and Albanian. There was no official reference to a "Macedonian" language. Therefore, the so-called "Macedonian language" is the Slavic language of Bitola. Later on the Skopjans transformed this language, which is closely related to old Bulgarian, and created a new, artificial language. This language constitutes one of the bases for the formation of an invented national consciousness and of the constitution of a constructed national state for the "Macedonians". The technique of using pseudonyms is a well known practice in the political arena.

## HOMER AND THE MACEDONIANS

"Homer did not know the Macedonians by this name. Of the many Macedonian peoples, Homer only mentions the Paeones (Paeonians) who lived in the heart of Macedonia. In the Trojan War, the Paeones joined the besieged Trojans, an indication that they were not Greeks"





**Map of ancient Macedonia with a clear demarcation of its borders**

1. Some ancient Greek writers did not consider the Paeonians to be Greeks, probably because they were not Macedonians.
2. Homer was not referring to a national war between Greeks and non-Greeks. The name Greek did not even exist. The only people among the Achaeans that were called Greeks were the Myrmidons, the soldiers under the leadership of Achilles, whom Alexander the Great considered his ancestor.
3. It is true that Homer did not refer to Macedonia. He did refer however, to areas which were the birthplace of Macedonians like Pieria and Emathia (E, 226). The name of Pieria is also mentioned in the Odyssey (E, 50). According to the geographer Strabo "the area of Macedonia was called in the past Emathia. The name Macedonia was given by an ancient king called Macedon" (VII, 11).
4. Despite the fact that Homer did not use the name Macedonia he did however use the word which constitutes the etymological basis of the words "Macedonians, Macedonia". In the Odyssey there is the phrase "phyla makednes aegairoio" (φύλλα μακεδνῆς αἰγείροιο) which means "leaves of high poplar". According to the lexicographer Hesychios the word "makednos" (μακεδνός), means tall, taper. This word comes from the root "mak-" ("μακ") which is common for the Greek words referring to height and length. Therefore makednos may be an early form of Macedon.

## THE GREEKS IN MACEDONIA

"Greek migrants came to Macedonia, Thrace, and Illyria after they had exhausted the possibilities of settlement in Asia Minor, Italy, France, Spain and Scythia, known

today as Ukraine and Russia".

1. Why the Greeks, with a population which according to Bacid, was scattered in all over Europe from Spain to Russia and founded many big cities (e.g. Marseilles, Syracuse, Naples, Odessa etc) had reason to go to Macedonia as migrants is a question which he does not answer.

What is the meaning of the phrase "after they had exhausted the possibilities of settlement"? Does Bacid tell us that the Greek population was so large that all of the European space was not sufficient for its settlement?

3. Bacid refers to some famous ancient Greeks who went to Macedonia in search of livelihood and adventure. These include Pythagoras (this is an assertion for which the evidence is missing) Euripides, Herodotus, and Aristotle. Aristotle actually was born in Stageira, Macedonia. His father was Phillip's personal doctor and the philosopher and he was the teacher of Alexander the Great.

Euripides did settle in Macedonia as a guest of king Archelaos. During this period he wrote two tragedies. The first was "Temenides", referring to the legendary ancestors of the Macedonian dynasty who hailed from the area of Argos in southern Greece. The second tragedy was "Archelaos". Euripides' aim was project the Macedonian king as a symbol of unity among the Greeks who were fighting in the Peloponesian War. In 406 BC Euripides presented in Macedonia his tragedy "Iphigenia in Aulis". The heroine delivers one of the following lines: "It is natural for the Greeks to rule over the barbarians and not for the barbarians to rule over Greeks, since the barbarians are slaves whereas Greeks



➔ are free people". Is it likely that the playwright would have used such a demeaning line in the presence of a non-Greek audience?

### **MACEDONIANS: GREEKS OR BARBARIANS?**

"The Greeks unanimously stereotyped the Macedonians as 'barbarians' and treated them in the same bigoted manner in which they treated all non-Greeks".

1. This statement is most interesting for what it reveals about its author. What evidence does he produce what all Greeks thought or how they treated all non-Greeks? This sweeping statement effectively undermines any idea the reader may have about a scholarly method of argumentation. Bacid's text is reduced to a shrill, bigoted expression against all Greeks...

2. The word barbaros (=barbarian) had many meanings: It was originally used to describe a person that did not

speak Greek, a foreigner. Eventually it assumed the meaning of uncivilized person. Concerning the Macedonians, the word barbarian did not mean people who spoke a non-Greek language, since, according to Livy "the Aetolians, the Acarnanians and the Macedonians spoke the same language" ("Aetolos, Acarnanas, Macedonas, eiusque

linguae homines", XXX 1,29). One must ask whether Bacid believes that the tragedies performed in Macedonia were translated from Greek in to a putative local language.

During the classical period the southern Greeks did not use the word barbarian only in order to define somebody nationally or linguistically. It was also used to describe and/or to demean a vulgar or uncivilized person. In any case, it was a word more connected with culture and less with race. A Greek was not the person who necessarily had Greek ancestors. He was one who shared in the Greek culture. According to Isocrates "Greeks are those who partake of our education (or cultivation)."

### **EXPULSION OF GREEKS FROM MACEDONIA**

"In any case, by the middle of the fourth pre-Christian century, Greek settlers were expelled from Macedonia". Another assertion not supported by the evidence, as with the story of the "expulsion" of Aristotle from Macedonia. It is true that Philip destroyed some colonies of other Greeks. This destruction does not mean that he generally persecuted the Greeks in the region.

### **ALEXANDER I AND PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES**

"Herodotus, the Father of History, relates how the Macedonian King Alexander I (498-454 BC), a Philhellene, that is 'a friend of the Greeks' and logically a non-Greek, wanted to take part in the Olympic games. The Greek athletes protested, saying they would not run with a Barbarian."

1. As usual, Bacid cites only part of the passage by Herodotus on the case of the participation of Alexander I in the Olympic Games in order to support his point. The whole passage includes the information that the judges of the Games accepted that Alexander I was Greek and allowed him to participate in the Olympiad. "He competed in racing (stadion) and he reached the finish line together with the first athlete" (Herodotus, VII). It is possible that the other Greek competitors knew that Alexander was a good athlete and they tried to be rid of him by claiming that he was barbarian.

2. Regarding the term Philhellene: This word was used to describe either an eminent person with panhellenic feelings or one who offered good services to Greece. It did not connote a foreigner necessarily. For example was used for the king of Sparta Agesilaos (Xenophon, Ages. VII, 3-4), for Jason from Pherrai and for Euagoras from Cyprus (Isocrates, 107 A', 199 A') who were all undoubtedly Greeks. According to Plato "a Good Greek is the person who is Philhellene".

3. In another unsubstantiated assertion Bacid claims that the Macedonians never considered the Greeks as their kinsmen. This ignores the issue of the Persian Wars. Herodotus, the most reliable historian on these wars wrote:

"Greeks are those people who are descendants of Perdikas; this is what the Greeks say and I shall prove below that they are Greeks." (Herodotus V.22) He continued by citing the incident relating the participation of Alexander I in the Olympic Games.

4. In 513 BC Alexander I executed the Persian emissaries because they offended the women who were living in the palace. In order to entrap them and make them drop their guard, he said the following: "Tell the king who send you here that a Greek received you well and offered you gastronomic and sexual pleasures" (Herodotus, V. 20)

5. In 480-479 Alexander I was forced to accompany the Persians in their expedition to southern Greece. The night before the battle in Plataea, Alexander arrived in the Greek camp and informed his compatriots of the Persians plans. When he gave the information he added the following: "I would not have revealed these plans if I was not interested generally for Greece. I am of Greek descent and I do not want to see Greece being enslaved instead of being free".

### **HERODOTUS ON THE MACEDONIANS**

1. Bacid avoids referring to Herodotus in detail probably so as to avoid citing what the ancient author wrote about the "Makednon nation". Specifically, Herodotus wrote about the movements of the Dorians that in the past "they lived in Pindus and they were called Makednon nation". Only "after they came to Peloponnesus they were called Dorian nation" (I, 56). According to the father of history the Dorians, the most powerful Greek tribe, were the descendants of the Makednons/ Macedonians.

2. Herodotus also recounted the ancestry of the Macedonian royal family. According to this story, three brothers, Ganavis, Aeropos and Perdikas, who were sons of Temenos, left Argos and went to upper Macedonia. Later, the three brothers were established in the area of

**"A Greek was not the person who necessarily had Greek ancestors. He was one who shared in the Greek culture"**



Vermion and Perdikas was the founder of the dynasty which became known as Temenides or Argeiades, names which reflect origins from the area of Argos.

## THUCYDIDES ON THE MACEDONIANS

"The historian Thucydides, himself half barbarian, considered the Macedonians as barbarians"

Thucydides never described the Macedonians as barbarians. On the contrary he accepts the tradition of the origins from Argos: "The contemporary Macedonia next to the sea was occupied by Alexander son of Perdikas and by his ancestors who founded a kingdom there" (II, 99).

## INSULTS BY DEMOSTHENES

"...not only no Greek, nor related to the Greeks, but not even a barbarian from any place that can be named with honors, but a pestilent knave from Macedonia, whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave" [Third Phillipic, 31]

1. This passage of the Athenian speaker Demosthenes offers the only documentary support to Bacid's arguments. Demosthenes was the most important political opponent of Philip and Alexander the Great. However, even here Bacid uses the evidence in a sloppy manner: the expression that Demosthenes actually used in his speech to describe the Macedonian King is not "pestilent knave from Macedonia" but rather "destructive Macedonian" [ολέθρου Μακεδόνας].

2. Demosthenes speeches were political; they were not for the historical record, rather they aimed to insult Philip, who defeated the Athenians. These insults cannot be used uncritically as evidence. An ancient commentator comments of the use of the word barbarian by Demosthenes (Third Olynthiac 16):

"Demosthenes describes Philip as a barbarian because he wants to insult him. Nevertheless, if he wanted to check he would have discovered that [Philip] is a Greek from Argos, a descendant of Heracles, a fact which is testified to by all the historians".

3. The real weight of these insults is proven by the fact that another Athenian speaker, Aeschines, described Demosthenes as "a barbarian who speaks Greek" (*Peri parapresbeias*, par. 172).

4. Demosthenes wrote nine speeches against Philip. In three of them he characterizes Philip as a barbarian. In the Third Olynthiac (16) he wrote, "Is he not an enemy, does he not occupy our lands, is he not a barbarian or whatever somebody may say about him?"

This last phrase "or whatever somebody may say about him" demonstrates that the word barbarian is used as an insult and not as an ethnic description. Demosthenes spoke about Philip's behavior and not about his origins. If Philip was a non-Greek, a barbarian, this word is not likely to have been an insult. Moreover Philip was a member of the Delphic Amphictyonic League in which only Greeks had the right to participate.

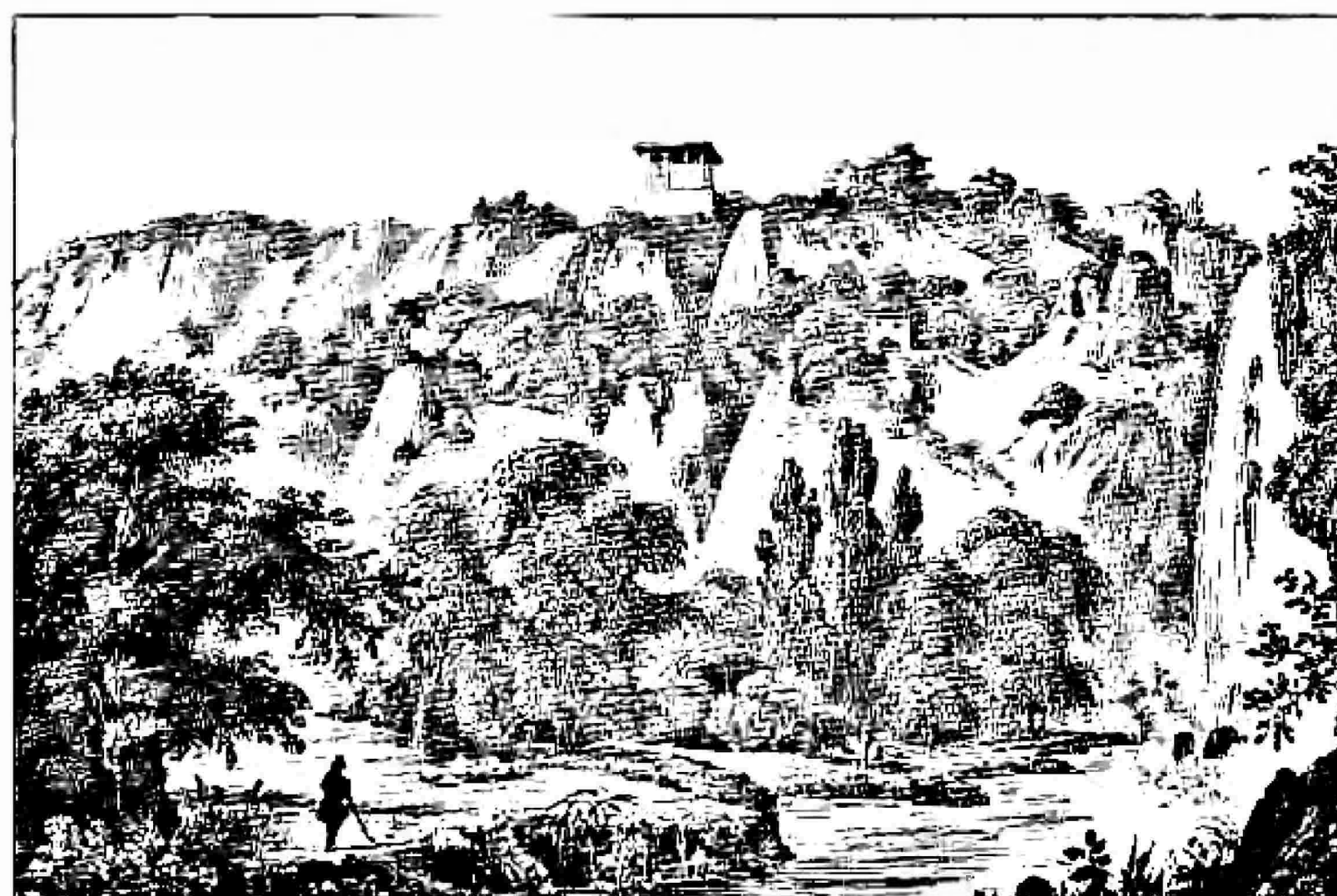
5. Demosthenes countered Aeschines, who was the leader of the pro-Macedonian party in Athens. If Philip was a barbarian no pro-Macedonian party would have been formed in Greece and more specifically in Athens.

6. The views of Demosthenes were dismissed by some of his contemporaries. Isocrates, who was supported the unification of all the Greeks, considered Philip as the leader of the Greek world. In his *Epistolae* to Philip he wrote, "I intend to advise you to be loyal to the work of the unification of all the Greeks and to the campaign against the barbarians" (15-16) and "You are the most renowned and richest man among the Greeks." (8)

7. The best response to the Insults of Demosthenes is given by Polybius, the greatest Greek historian after Thucydides:

"Although Demosthenes can be praised for many things, at the same time he must be criticized because, thoughtlessly and unwisely, he dishonored and discredited the best of the Greeks" (XVII, 14.1-12).

8. Polybius produced much evidence which demolishes the arguments of the Croat-American historian. For example Lykiscus, the ambassador of the Acarnanians in Sparta, thanked the Macedonians for their struggle



*The waterfalls  
by Edessa*

for the freedom of the Greeks by saying:

"How honored must the Macedonians be, who during the greater part of their existence have been fighting against the barbarians for the security of the Greeks. Otherwise, the situation in Greece would have been in great danger if we did not have the Macedonians as the bulwark..." (IX, 34.1).

## PHILOTAS' TRIAL

"[Alexander speaking] 'The Macedonians are about to pass judgment upon you; I wish to know whether you will use their native tongue in addressing them.' Thereupon Philotas replied: 'Besides the Macedonians there are many present who I think will more easily understand what I shall say if I use the same language which you have employed for no other reason, I suppose, than in order that your speech might be understood by the greater number.' Then said the king: 'Do you not see how Philotas loathes even the language of the fatherland? For he alone disdains to learn it. But let him by all means speak in whatever way he desires, provided that you remember that he holds our customs in as much abhorrence as our language.'" [Quintus



➔ Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander the Great of Macedon*, VI. ix 34-36]

1. Curtius Rufus wrote his works around 70 A.D. which is 300 years after the trial. His information is taken from Cleitarchos, whose work is written in an anecdotal style. The information that the trial took place in the presence of a multiethnic audience does not correspond with what the eyewitnesses wrote on the incident. According to Arrian, Philotas' trial (A 25,7) took place in the land of the Zaragaiol which is located in the present Afganistan. Arrian wrote: "According to Ptolemy son of Lagus, Philotas was brought to trial to face the Macedonians." Ptolemy was an eyewitness and it must be assumed that he had more direct knowledge than

Curtius Rufus, and Bacid. The same view is supported by Diodorus (XVII, 79.5-80).

2. The problem concerning the languages used by Alexander the Great and Philotas is relatively simple. The Macedonians certainly used a local dialect, as other Greeks did, and still do today. Plutarch, describing the clash between Alexander and Cleitus, referred to this dialect using the term "Macedonian language." "He (Alexander) screamed in Macedonian calling his aides-de-camp". Alexander did indeed speak "Macedonian," e.g. the Macedonian

dialect of Greek, as the Ionians spoke the Ionic and the Dorians the Doric one.

## THE END OF GREEK HISTORY!

"The Macedonian 'Barbarian' defeated Greece at the battle of Chaeroneia in August 338 BC and appointed himself 'Commander of the Greeks.' The date is commonly known as the end of Greek history and the start of the Macedonian era. Greece did regain its independence until 1827 A.D."

What happened to the Greeks for the period of 2165 years is something which shall be surveyed below. The year 338 B.C. is not commonly known as the end of Greek history but marks the beginning of the decay of the city-state and the starting point of the history of Macedonian Hellenism. Therefore, as the Athenians, Thebans and Spartans had assumed a dominant role in the affairs of the Greeks, the Macedonians assumed this role after they imposed their political and military dominance.

## WHY THE MACEDONIANS SPREAD THE GREEK LANGUAGE?

"Though the Macedonians expelled the Greeks from Macedonia and Thrace, they permitted them to settle throughout their vast empire in Asia and Africa. Antioch(e)ia and Alexandria, to name just two most important cities established by Macedonians, grew into large cosmopolitan metropolises (sic) where Europeans, Africans and Asians were trading goods and ideas and where the Greek language was mainly used as the *lingua franca* (common language) of the Macedonian empire".

1. Why did the Greek language become *lingua franca* and not the putative "Macedonian"? The Macedonians conquered Asia and Egypt in order to impose the Greek language? In one of his sweeping generalizations Bacid mentioned previously that they hated the Greeks. It is natural for the conquerors to impose their native language as the official language on the land they have conquered. The Macedonians spread the Greek language in the countries they conquered simply because Greek was their native language.

2. The Macedonians did not found any empire but a number of states which came to be known as "Hellenistic". Why not "Macedonistic"?

## THE DIOCESE OF MACEDONIA

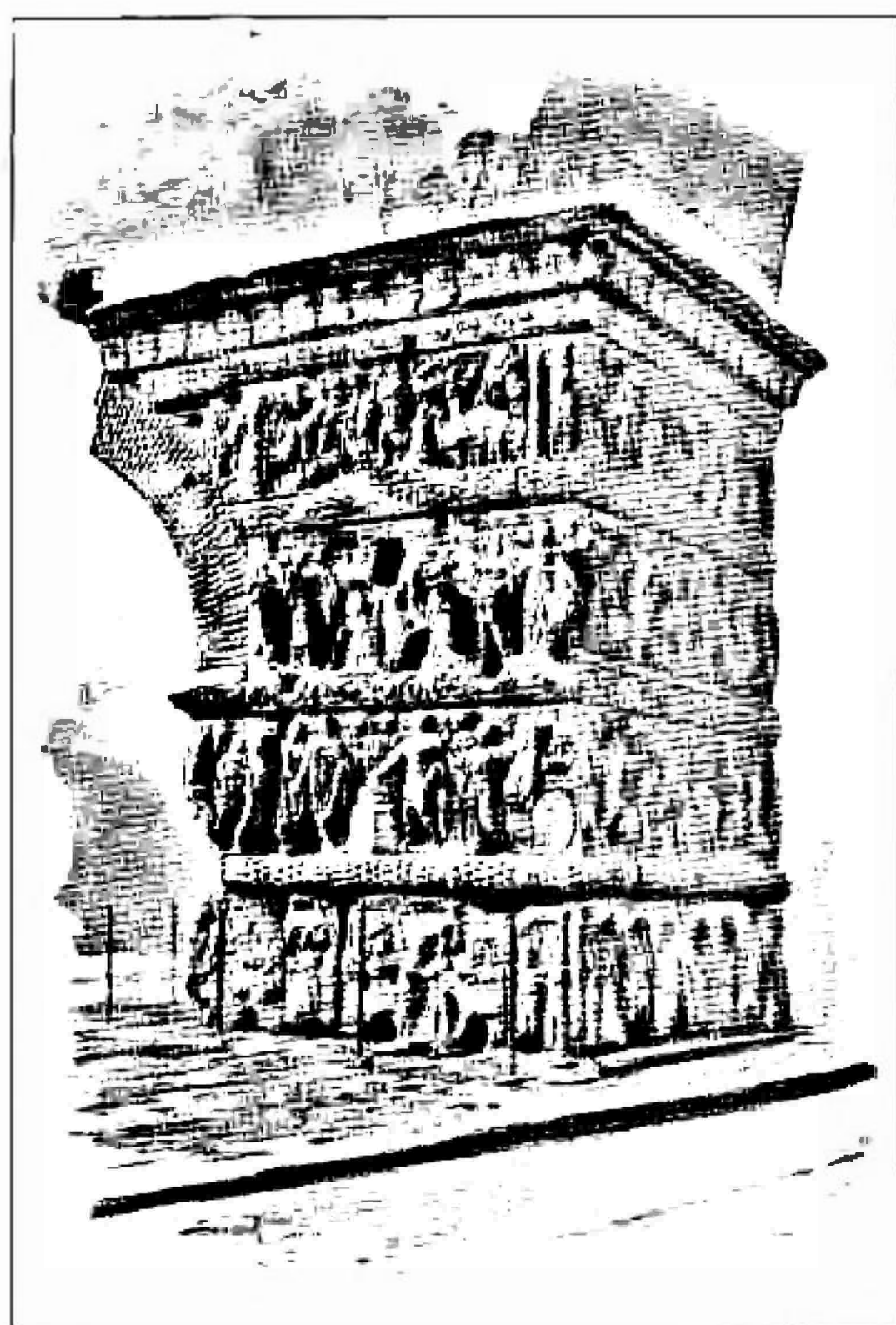
"While the Romans did not establish any province by the name of Greece or Hellas, there were two Macedonias in their empire".

During the period of their dominion it is worth noting that the Romans introduced changes of an administrative nature. In the Diocese with the general name of Macedonia was included almost the whole of Greece including Crete. By contrast, Skoupoi, the capital of the province of Dardania - present-day Skopje - was included in the Diocese of Dacia (present-day Romania). In the Roman period Skopje was not part of Macedonia.

## THE PAEONIANS CAME BACK AS SLAVS!

"In the sixth century, the Paeonians, who are presently called Slavs, returned and occupied the whole of Macedonia from the East Romans, with the exception of a few coastal cities".

If Bacid's argument were to have any validity he would have to demonstrate the historical connection between Paeonians and Slavs, groups whose appearance in history is separated by over a millennium. Bacid provides no sources or other forms of evidence of how this transmutation took place. He arbitrarily asserts that the end of the Roman dominion came in the 6th century, because this is when the first Slavic tribes appeared in the area. He suggests that these were Macedonians who returned to their homeland! If Bacid could provide the evidence of a link between the Paeonians and Slavs this could perhaps direct us to a resolution of the dispute with Greece. And even Bacid does not provide the evidence, something he is not in the habit of doing in any case. If the people of FYROM choose the term "Paeonians" in order to describe themselves, their dispute with Greece would end.



The arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE GREEKS

"After the establishment of Christianity, the Macedonians and the Greeks abandoned their nationality and embraced the new identity as Christian and Roman citizens".

1. The name Hellen, associated with pagans, was discarded, but the name Macedonian was widely used. Roman citizenship to all Roman Empire subjects had been granted by emperor Caracalla in 212 A.D., a long time before Christianity became dominant. Roman citizenship did not abolish the Greek identity and culture. On the contrary, after the shift of the capital from Rome to Byzantium the empire was gradually hellenized and latinization receded. Greek became the official language. The Byzantine chronographer Ioannes Lydus (6th century) mentioned that the inhabitants of the peninsula of Almos (the Balkans) were forced to speak Latin, although they were mostly Greeks.

2. If the inhabitants of Macedonia had no contact with Greek classical education and had lost their Hellenic consciousness, how was it possible for the writer Demetrius Cydones while praising emperor Manuel II (1391-1425) to compare the inhabitants of Thessaloniki to the fighters of the battle of Marathon. The connection with the Hellenic intellectual tradition was continuous and unbroken.

## THE SLOVENES AND THE SLAVS

"Those who used Slavic language were known as Slovene". The Byzantines used to refer to the Slavic tribes with the names Sklavoi, Sklavounoi, Sklavenoi but not with the name Slovene.

## THE MACEDONIAN INDEPENDENCE DURING THE 7TH CENTURY A.D.!

"Macedonia maintained its independence and resisted attacks by the Armenian and Syrian dynasties which held power in New Rome (Byzantium)".

1. Bacid fails to state when exactly Macedonia appeared as an independent area or state, by which name it was known and who were its rulers.

2. What does he exactly mean by "Armenian and Syrian dynasties"? He possibly refers to the Isaurians and Leo V the Armenian (813-820), who, nevertheless fought against the Bulgarians. Constantine V (740-775), because of his victories, was the first emperor named "Bulgar-Slayer."

3. Macedonia was mostly a part of the Mediaeval Greek (Byzantine) Empire.

## CYRIL, METHODIUS AND THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

"Since the sixth century the native Macedonian language has been the dominant speech of the land. It was first systematized in the middle of the ninth Christian century by SS. Cyril and Methodius, the apostles to the Slavs who were born in Thessaloniki/Solun. The Macedonian language has functioned as the principal literary,

liturgical and colloquial language of Macedonia ever since".

1. Bacid fails to mention the specific area to which he refers.

2. The two brothers Cyril and Methodius were indeed born in Thessaloniki. The name Solun does not appear in any Byzantine source as it is a later Slavic word.

3. The ruler of Moravia (in present-day Czech Republic) Ratislav invited Cyril and Methodius who created the Glagolitic alphabet modeling it on the Greek one. They named the alphabet Glagolitic, not name it "Macedonian;" later it became known as Cyrillic. "Macedonian" is a construct formalized by the Skopjans during the Tito period. There is a question furthermore about how widely



used this language is even in the FYROM - self-proclaimed "Macedonia" - since 35% of the population speak Albanian and other sizeable ethnic minorities speak their own languages.

*Aerial photo of the Chryssi Castle in Almopia*

## THE BYZANTINE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY

1. Bacid notes that in 867 A.D. the first European dynasty arose in the medieval Eastern Roman Empire. This is an error. The emperors Theodosius the Great (4th century) and Justinian (6th century) who ruled long before also were European.

2. Bacid mentions that the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty spoke both Greek and Macedonian, meaning Slavic. The fact that they spoke Greek is natural, as all emperors did. It is during this dynasty that Greek letters flourished. Indeed two emperors of this dynasty, Leo VI (the Wise, 886-912) and Constantine VII (Porphyrogenetus, 913-959), were scholars and wrote extensively in Greek. There is no reference to a "Macedonian" language, nor are there any writings in this language nor any evidence attesting to the existence of such.

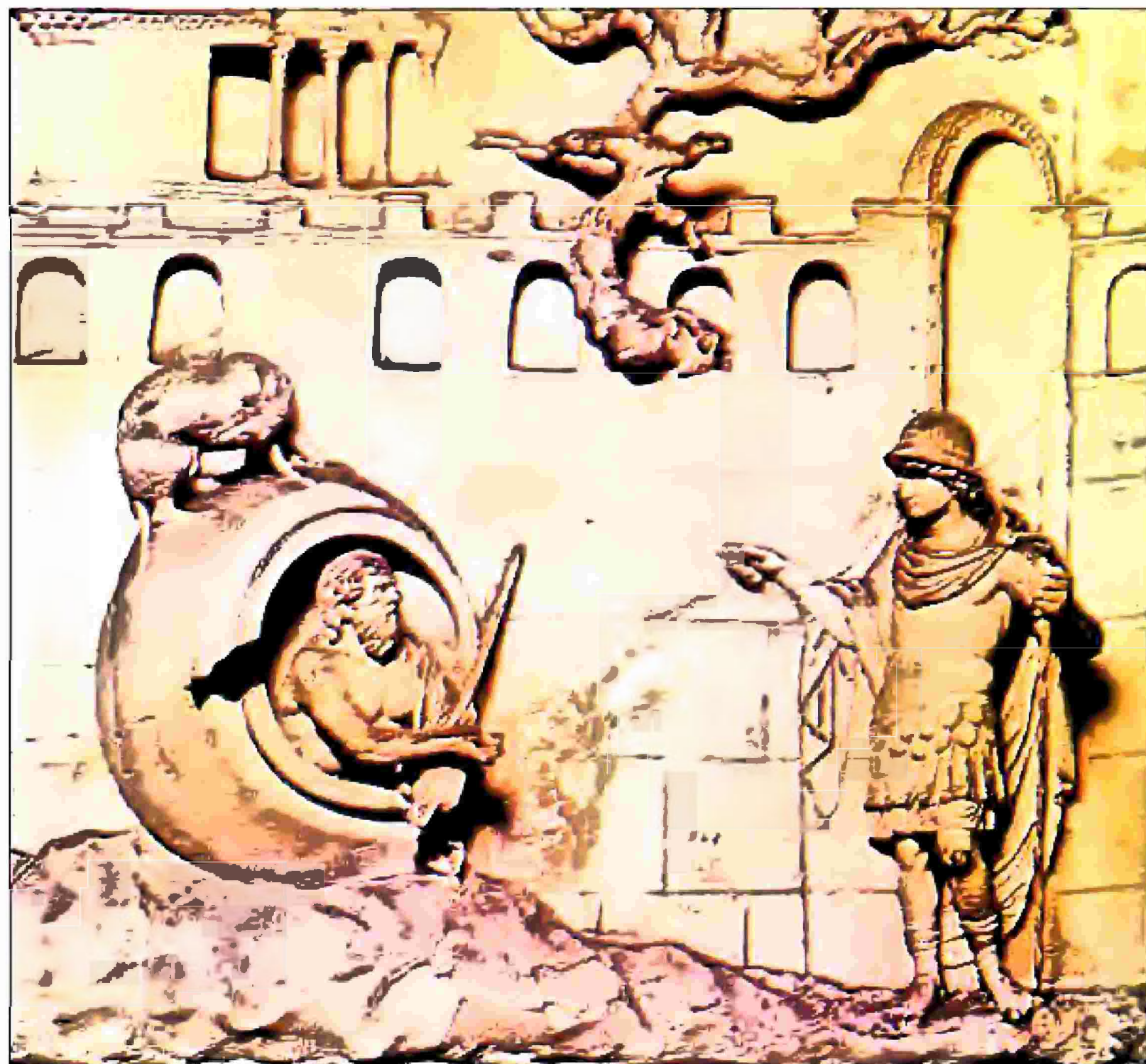
3. In the 12th century a new dynasty appeared in Macedonia which reached its peak under the reign of Samuel (976-1014). According to the most credible historians this king was of Armenian descent, son of the count Nicolaos Komitopoulos and the state he founded



➔ was Bulgarian! This is the reason Basil II destroyed it and hence became known as the Bulgar-Slayer. It is interesting to note that after Samuel's defeat, Basil II went as a pilgrim to the Acropolis of Athens.

### THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

"The Eastern-Roman Empire was destroyed by the Crusaders in 1204".



**Alexander the Great and the philosopher Diogenes (Rome, Villa Albani)**

In 1204 Constantinople was captured by Western Europeans and the Empire was divided into Hellenic and Frankish states. The fact that the Empire was divided does not necessarily mean that it ceased to exist. It was reunited in 1261 after Emperor Michael Palaeologus liberated Constantinople.

### THE YEARS BEFORE THE OTTOMAN OCCUPATION

"During the next two and a half centuries the Macedonians fought foreign invaders, adventurers and bandits who tried to dominate their land".

1. With the term "Macedonians" Bacid may be referring to the Bulgarians, Serbs and the Albanians of George Kastriotis. From the point of view of western Europeans, these were all Greeks. On the tombstone of the Venetian nobleman Dominico Michell (1122-1125) the following words are inscribed: "Terror Graecorum sacet hic".

2. The Turks established themselves in Macedonia after the fall of Thessaloniki (1430) and Constantinople (1453) and gave to the peninsula of Aimos the name "Rumelia", not because it once belonged to the Roman Empire, as Bacid suggests, but because the vast majority of its population was Romaic/Greek. Rum was the name used by the Turks for the Greeks since the time of the Seljuks.

(Rumili means the country of the Rum, e.g. of the Greeks). There is no known mention in the Ottoman sources of an independent or separate Macedonian nation or people.

### MACEDONIA IN THE BEGGINING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

"Macedonia entered this century as a province of the Ottoman Empire, divided among the Solun, Bitola and Kosovo villayets. The region was occupied primarily by Macedonians. The census in the three villayets taken by the Ottoman state in 1905 found 3,171,690 inhabitants".

1. Solun refers to Thessaloniki and Bitola to Monastirion. Kosovo and part of the Bitola vilayet did not belong to Macedonia geographically.

2. The census Bacid cites does not mention Macedonians as a category. The following table shows the figures given by the Ottoman census:

Muslims (mostly Albanians from Kosovo)	1,729,007
Greeks	647,932
Bulgarians	527,757
Serbs	167,601
Jews	48,270
Vlachs	30,116

Note that the Vlachs possessed a Greek identity, in their vast majority.

According to the same census the Greeks were divided as follows: In the area of Thessaloniki 373,217, in the area of Bitola 261,183, and in the area of Kosovo 13,000. This suggests that in the area of Macedonia proper, the Greeks formed the vast majority.

3. Additional evidence reinforces the suggestion that the Greeks constituted the majority in Macedonia. An agreement was signed on 11 March 1912 by Greeks and Bulgarians in Constantinople which gave the two nations the following representation in the Turkish Parliament: Areas of Thessaloniki/Monastiri: Greeks 10, Bulgarians 3. As far as Thrace is concerned, all seats (9) were given to Greeks. If a separate Macedonian nation existed, the Turks would have had no reason to ignore it and every reason to recognize it as they used the practice of "divide and rule" when dealing with ethnic minorities.

4. During the period of conflict about the claim to Macedonia between Bulgarians and Greeks (1903-1908) John B. Jackson, the ambassador of the United States in Athens had his authority extend to Macedonia. The Greek researcher Dimitrios Seremetis published Jackson's reports to US Secretary of State John Hay. Jackson provides the following information:

"The Macedonians, although they long for their liberation from the Turkish occupation are more sympathetic towards Greece rather than Bulgaria and they would never be interested to be united with the latter".

### THE BALKAN WARS

1. During the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 the Turks did not lose the greater part of Macedonia but all of it. More accurately, they lost the greater part of the land they



occupied in the Balkan peninsula. The victors did not share Macedonia, they shared the areas of the Balkan peninsula which were liberated by their armies.

2. Two comments have to be made on the so-called "Republic of Macedonia", founded by the "anti-fascist" leader of Yugoslavia Josip Broz (Tito) : its official name was People's Republic which means Communist Republic of Macedonia and it was a part of Yugoslavia. Tito's aim was to occupy the Greek part of Macedonia. This was the reason he supported the communists during Greece's Civil War. Today the nomenclature of Skopje consists of the tragic remains of that horrid period. It is part of the only communist (first Stalinist, later Titoist) establishment which still survives in Europe.

## THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

1. Bacid devotes a special chapter in order to prove that the Macedonians during the era of Alexander the Great were using their own mother tongue and he provides as sole evidence what Curtius Rufus mentions about the trial of Philotas. Apart from what has already been mentioned the following also emphasizes the linguistic Hellenicity of Macedonia:

a) Common Macedonian names which describe things, animals, military and/or political institutions generally are Greek in terms of their roots, their type and their meaning, though some are used idiomatically.

b) The Macedonian names are Greek in terms of roots and type.

c) The national name of the Macedonians has always been Greek.

d) Most Macedonian toponyms have Greek root and type. For example, the word for the first capital of the Macedonians, Aegae derives from the root *aeg-* which is common to many Greek words: Aegean, Aegina, Aegion e.t.c.). Other toponyms, even if of uncertain root, have a Greek type.

e) The Macedonians never spoke or wrote in any other language except in Greek. They conquered a large part of the world, left thousands of inscriptions and other written material, all in Greek.

f) The names of the months were Greek.

2. Greek lexicographers recorded about 150 idiomatic or dialectal words relating to Macedonian Greek. Perhaps this is the evidence to which Bacid refers when he states "roughly one hundred texts which include Macedonian words." These were Greek words however.

## PHILIP, PHILIPOUPOLIS AND PLOVDIV

"The native Macedonian and Thracian form of his name (e.g. Philip) was recorded in the name of the Thracian town which he had conquered and named *Pulpudeva*, "the city of Philip". In the language of its Slavic citizens it is known today as *Plovdiv*. The cosmopolitan form of the city name is Philippoupolis, a learned rendering of the native name." The present name "Plovdiv" was created at the end of the 19th century by the Bulgarian nationalist N. Gerov, based on a Bulgarian phonetic corruption of Philippoupolis. In Slavic documents during the period of the Turkish occupation the town appears with the name Philippovgrad. The name Plaudin appears until 1614. It is a corrupted

version of the name Flavia, which was given to the town by the Romans. Bacid repeats a Bulgarian nationalist myth that the Thracian word Poulpoudiva later became Philippodava.

## TOPONYMS IN MACEDONIA

1. Bacid urges the Greeks to learn linguistics so that they will be able to comprehend the meaning of the name of Edessa. He suggests that the ancient Macedonian name was "Voden", which means "city of waters". However, the only name that appears in the works of the ancient writers is Edessa.

2. He further blames the linguists, because they interpret the Slavic name of the town, "Vodena" as a word deriving from "Voda", which means water. He also supports the unfounded view that the modern Greek state forced the inhabitants of Macedonia to replace the name Solun with Thessaloniki (a name by which the city has been known for 2,500 years).

3. Bacid informs us that the river which passes through Katerini, and which is called Mavroneri by the Greeks ("Black Water") was also known with the "Macedonian" name of Crna Reka. This name is a Slavic name. The use of two names is natural for an area where Greeks

and Slavs lived together. The same applies for the name "Nezero" which is the Slavic name for Mount Olympus.

4. Bacid also refers to the changes in toponyms made by the Greek state after 1913. It was a natural for the newly founded state to wish to change names imposed during the Ottoman occupation of more than five centuries.

5. Bacid even regards the name of the town Preveza as "Macedonian". The ancient name of the town was Berenicia and it was built by King Pyrrus of Epirus. The Roman emperor Augustus later founded in the same area the famous town Nikopolis. The name Preveza derives from the Slavic word *prevoz* (=passage) and the diminutive ending *-eze*. There has been no effort by the Greek state to change the name of the town and of the surrounding prefecture.

## ALEXANDER'S MOTHER

Bacid refers to the descent of Alexander's mother, doubling its Greek origin. It is likely not a coincidence that he does not mention her name, Olympias, so that the



**Bronze helmet cheek guard with a representation of Nike in relief. Found in St. George of Grevena, 4th c. BC.**



➤ reader will not connect it with the Olympian Zeus, Olympia and the Olympic Games, all of which are associations central to Greek consciousness.

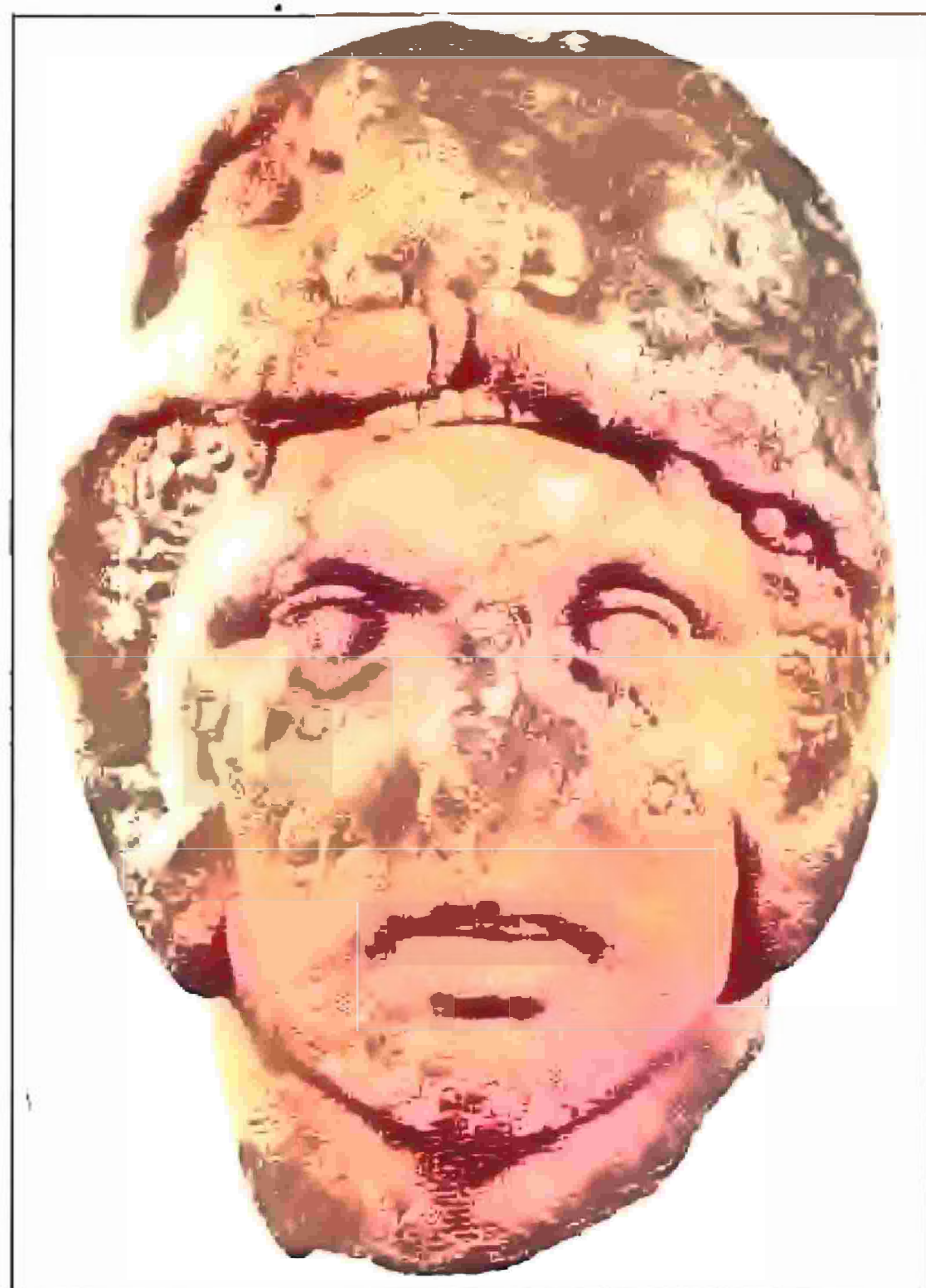
## ALEXANDER, THE GREEKS AND THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

"Though Alexander spoke Greek, loved Homer and respected his tutor Aristotle, there is much evidence that he hated and despised the Greeks of his day".

1. While Bacid may project his own sentiments the evidence associated with Alexander's actions suggest otherwise. After the victory in Granicus (334 B.C.) he sent to Athens 300 Persian shields, which were displayed on the Acropolis with the well known inscription:

"Alexander, son of Philip, and the Greeks, save the Lacedaemonians, from the booty of the barbarians who dwell in Asia".

2. The Greek mercenaries who were captured, were sent to Macedonia as slaves, because - as Arrian mentions (Alex. An. A., 16,6) - "despite the common decisions of the Greeks, and despite the fact that they were all Greeks, they fought against the Greeks and on the side of the barbarians". The fact that numerous Greek mercenaries fought against Alexander on the Persian side



**Marble portrait of Alexander. The headpiece to the lion skin of Heracles. Found in Kerameikos, Athens (beginning 3rd c. BC; Archaeological Museum, Athens)**

does not suggest that Alexander's Greek identity is in doubt. It is rather a sign of the decline of standards which followed after the destructive Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC).

3. After the battle of Issus (333 B.C.) Darius asked to negotiate. Alexander answered with the following words: "When they invaded Macedonia and the rest of Greece, your ancestors harmed us, although we had not harmed them ever before. I, therefore, after becoming the leader of all Greeks and because I wished to punish the Persians, invaded Asia, because it is you who started this hatred". (Arr., B', 14,4).

4. According to Plutarch's statement (Alexander, 69, A) whenever Alexander encountered a foreign inscription somewhere in Asia he gave the order to inscribe the Greek translation underneath. When he decided to take a selected group of young Persians into his army, he "ordered them to learn Greek". (Plutarch, Alexander, 47,6) (and not the putative "Macedonian"). Thousands

of Greek inscriptions have been found in Asia, Africa and in Macedonia itself. All are in Greek, which was the language of the Macedonians and all other Greeks.

5. The destruction of Thebes can be attributed to one of the dark sides of his nature. In the history of ancient Greece we often come across wars between Greeks. The Spartan Lyssander destroyed Athens, the Athenians destroyed Melos and the Thebans the city of Plataea. The interpretation suggested by Bacid is not accurate, as Plutarch explains Alexander's behaviour by saying that the horrible need of war imposed such extreme behaviour "towards men of the same nationality and the same blood".

6. Plutarch offers additional evidence which attests to the Greek nature of the Macedonians and Alexander. In his famous work *Parallel Lives* he compares, or rather he parallels distinguished Greeks and Romans. Alexander is placed among the Greeks and is compared to Julius Caesar. Demetrius the Besieger, the most distinguished of Alexander's successors, is compared to Mark Anthony and Pyrrus, king of Epirus, is compared to Marius. None of the serious historians have expressed any doubts about Alexander's Greekness. The fact that he was a cosmopolitan Greek is suggested by the following statement attributed to him by Plutarch:

"He ordered all to consider the whole world as their nation, the virtuous people as their kin and the evil ones as strangers, and to regard virtue as proof of Hellenicity and evil as synonymous with barbarism". If Plutarch did not consider him to be Greek he would not have put these words in his mouth.

7. Alexander as a expression of devotion to Hellenism built temples in Delphi and Delos and rebuilt Plataea. He also sent some Persian booty to the colony of Croton in Southern Italy, because that city had participated in the sea battle of Salamis where the Greek fleet defeated the Persians in 480 BC.

8. Bacid's statement that Alexander sent away a messenger who brought him the news that a new war had erupted in Greece with the following words: "I am not interested in these battles of mice" is not sourced. None of the major ancient historians, including Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus, Pausanias, Justin and Curtius Rufus mention anything about "mouse battles".

9. What Bacid suggests about the deification of Alexander does not imply a lack of Greek consciousness. Deification of heroes was part of the Greek tradition (Heracles, Theseus etc). Clearchus, disciple of Isocrates and tyrant of Heracleia was also regarded as a god, and so was Philip in Ephesus. Last but not least, the Athenians had deified Demetrius the Besieger. For Alexander, his deification also served his political aims. The universal state he had founded needed a common ideology as a unifying bond, which under the conditions of the age was expressed in terms we call religious. Alexander's policy was later successfully continued by the Romans.

## MACEDONIANS AND MYGDONES

1. Towards the end of his article Bacid reveals that the name of the Macedonians may possibly derive from the word Mygdones. He does not explain what exactly were the Mygdones and what linguistic theory suggests the conversion





**Aerial view of  
the palace at  
Vergina**

of Mygdonians to Macedonians. The Mygdonians were a Thracian tribe. In some Greek myths Mygdon appears as a fellow-fighter of Heracles and in some others of Atreus, father of Agamemnon.

2. Bacid agrees that the Greeks contributed to the shaping and the popularization of the name "Macedonia", but that does not give them the copyright over the name "Macedonia." This also applies to the Skopjans, who also cannot claim the copyright of the name. The decisions of the Communist International and Tito's hegemonic plans certainly do not give them that right.

## **PAUL THE APOSTLE AND THE MACEDONIANS**

The Apostle Paul wrote his famous Epistles to the Thessalonians and Philippians, i.e. to the Macedonians in Greek. Since he sought the widest possible audience he certainly would have used a Macedonian language, if a distinct one existed.

## **MOUNT OLYMPUS AND STRABO**

"The geographer Strabo calls Olympus 'the highest mountain in Macedonia'. It still is".

1. No one suggests that Mount Olympus did not remain the same!

2. The name Olympus is panhellenic and an element of Greek identity. The same name is borne by the peak of Mount Troodos in Cyprus, a mountain in Central Euboea, the highest mountain of Skyros and a village in Karpathos, and last but not least Olympia, the birthplace of the Olympic Games.

3. Bacid conveniently overlooked Strabo's famous phrase following:

«ΕΣΤΙΝ ΟΥΝ ΕΛΛΑΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ» (Macedonia is therefore also Greek).

## **EPILOGUE**

Many foreigners, mostly Americans, wonder why the Greeks become distressed when the Skopjans usurp their history and with it the name of Macedonia. There are many reasons. Apart from the historical associations, which may appear to have little bearing on international politics but which relate to the intangible but real questions of identity, there are serious political reasons. Greece suffered a five-year long civil war (1944-1949) more horrible than the one in Yugoslavia, because of Stalin's imperialistic plans and Tito's hegemonic claims. The memoirs of Molotov, Stalin's closest associate, were recently published in America. When asked why the Soviets did not give a part of Greece to Bulgaria, he replied coldly: "It was desired, but not at that time" (see *Vyacheslav Molotov Remembers. Inside Kremlin Politics*, Ivan Dee, p.65).

The piece by Bacid, as with much of what is produced by "Macedonian" irredentists, tends to be cavalier with even the basic requirements of historical documentation, preferring instead to impose extreme and bigoted views by assertion and manipulation. The rationale underlying these tactics rests on the assumption shared by many totalitarian propagandists of the 20th century, viz. that if something is repeated often enough, however preposterous, something will stick and eventually gain some measure of legitimacy.

It is profoundly sad to witness the achievement of a communist aim, that was not accomplished during Stalin's reign, be accomplished during a time when the United States is the sole superpower.

*Surandos Kurgakos was born in Gythion, Laconia. He studied at the Athens University. He is the author of forty books, two of them relating to Macedonia: From the Macedonian question to the involvement of Skopje Athens 1992 and Philip and Alexander as military and political leaders, Athens 1993. He is a contributor to the weekly magazine Oikonomikos Tachydromos.*